no reservation in jobs for mentally handicapped persons, rehabilitation measures have been taken for il " mentally handicapped persons through the National Institute for the Mentally handicapped and through Non-Governmental Organisations receiving financial support from the Government under grant-in-aid schemes.

Waiving the ceiling on the eligibility for payment of bonus to Industrial Workers

2431. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ceiling on eligibility has been waived in the matter of payment of annual bonus to Central Government employees;

(b) whether Government are considering to waive the same for the industrial workers also;

(c) if so, the present status of the matter; and

(d) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) Wage ceiling for Group 'C & 'D' employee; of the Central Government has been removed for Payment of Ad-hoc Bonus for the year 1995-96.

(b) to (d) Wage ceiling for determining eligibility for bonus has been laid down under the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965. The ceiling was recently enhanced by amending this Act from Rs. 2500/—per month to Rs. 3500/—per month. No decision for amending the Act further has been taken so far.

Import of Coal by SAIL

2432. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the amount spent by SAIL on indigenous and imported coal separately during the last three years, year-wise;

(b) whether SAIL imports coal from Australia at a much higher price then that available from Coal India Limited;

(c) if so the reasons therefor;

(d) whether CIL has recently hiked the price of its coal; and

(e) if so, the extent of restriction SAIL has imposed on purchase of coal from CIL and the extent to which that would put extra financial pressure on SAIL's import bill?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL & MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) The amount spent by SAIL on indigenous and imported coking coal including freight, taxes etc. during the last three years is:—

(Rs. is crores)

Year	Imported Coal	Indigenous Coal	Total
1993-94	1091.71	1095.88	2187.59
1994-95	1196.98	1161.36	2358.34
1995-96	1567.65	1164.35	2732.00

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) SAIL imports low ash metallurgical coking coal of prime quality as a qualitative and quantitative supplement to the indigenous coking coal to meet the total requirement of steel plants. The imported coal purchased by SAIL is also superior in quality as compared to indigenous coal in respect of ash percentage, from swelling index rank, etc.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The consumption of indigenous and imported coal depends upon the inter play of certain factors such as relative

availability and prices of indigenous and imported coal and ratio of their use in the blend, market demand conditions, etc. However, SAIL has no plan to increase imports of coking coal during the current year.

Non implementation of Old Age and Widow Pension Schemes in Assam

2433. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in spite of a statement during the last session of Parliament that old age and widow pension shall be continued at the national level, these schemes are not being implemented in Assam much to the dismay and sorrow of the downtrodden people;

(b) if so, the steps Government are taking to keep these schemes on going; and

(c) by when the people of Assam in general, and those of Barak Valley districts in particular, expect to get the benefits of these schemes?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) The National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is under implementation throughout the country including Assam w.e.f. 15th August, 1995. Accordingly all the three components of the NSAP namely—The National Old Age Pension Scheme, The National Family Benefit Scheme and the National Maternity Benefit Scheme are in operation in Assam.

During the initial year of implementation (1995-96) an amount of Rs. 195.83 lakhs was released to the State of Assam out of which the concerned District Level authorities have already spent Rs. 99.73 lakhs as per report received as on date.

(b) Since the Scheme (NOAPS) for providing old age benefit to the eligible beneficiaries (poor & destitute) is already in operation, no new steps is necessary.

(c) The eligible people of Assam in general and those of the Barak Valley districts in particular, are already deriving benefit out of the existing old age pension scheme namely, National Old Age Pension Scheme. During 1995-96, a sum of Rs. 24.75 lakhs was released for the NOAPS to these three districts of Barak Valley. The Districts have since reported utilisation of Rs. 21.26 lakhs till date.

NGOs engaged in Promoting Consumer Awareness

2434. SHRI K. RAHAMN KHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether NGOs are encouraged in promoting consumer awareness and if so, the names of NGOs working in Kamataka;

(b) whether such NGOs are assisted by Government; if so, the nature of assistance and the grant given to each of the NGOs; and

(c) whether a National Institute to promote Consumer Awareness is established; if so, the details of the functions of the Institute;

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. As per the Directory of voluntary consumer organisations compiled by the Ministry, 39 such organisations are functioning in the State of Kamataka. A statement indicating the names and address is given in the enclosed Statement. *(See* below)

(b) Yes, Sir. A statement indicating the details of grant in aid given to NGOs for consumer awareness under the Consumer Welfare Fund scheme is given.

(c) No, Sir.